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Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO BEIRUT LONDON JIDDA KUWAIT
TEL AVIV CAIRO JERUSALEM USUN FROM AMMAN MAY 8

QUOTE

S E C R E T AMMAN 2490

EXDIS

DEPT PASS USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE INFO

E. O. 11652: XGDS1
TAGS: PINS, LE, JO
SUBJ: JORDANIAN VIEWS ON SITUATION IN LEBANON

SUMMARY: I SAW ZAYD RIFA' I TODAY, OSTENSIBLY ABOUT USG
AID (SEE SEPTEL). FIRST, HOWEVER, HE TALKED AT LENGTH
ABOUT LEBANON, INTERRUPTING TO TAKE CALL FROM KING WHO
WANTED LATEST INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION. SOMBERNESS OF
HIS REMARKS ABOUT DETERIORATION AREA AS WELL AS LEBANESE
CONDITIONS ACCENTED DURING OUR MEETING BY ARRIVAL OF NEWS
THAT MILITARY GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED IN LEBANON UNDER
GHANAM, THAT SYRIANS HAD ANNOUNCED " FULL SUPPORT FOR
REVOLUTION IN LEBANON," AND HAD CLOSED BORDERS. ZAYD ASKED
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FOR USG INTENTIONS. SAID HE SAW LITTLE WAY FOR JORDAN TO PLAY ROLE IN PRESENT STATE OF CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

1. JORDAN INTELLIGENCE IN LEBANON. ZAYD CALLED KING WITH SUMMARY OF JORDANIAN INTELLIGENCE ABOUT CONDITIONS IN LEBANON. SAID THAT FIGHTING ON BROAD SCALE HAD BROKEN OUT IN BEIRUT AND THAT LEBANESE ARMY POSITION WAS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. JORDANIAN AMBASSADOR REPORTING THAT " THIRD FORCE" IN LEBANON, CONSISTING OF DOMESTIC LEBANESE LEFTISTS AND ELEMENTS AROUND KAMAL JUMBLATT, WERE USING FEDAYEEN IN ATTEMPT TO TAKE OVER LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. ELEMENT IN THIRD FORCE TACTIC WAS EXACERBATE ARMY- FEDAYEEN FIGHTS AND DISCREDIT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO REACH SETTLEMENT. ZAYD SAID HE BELIEVED EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS, WHO INCREASINGLY UNABLE TO BUY TIME IN THE MIDEAST SETTLEMENT EFFORTS, HAD INTEREST IN SUPPORTING SUCH DISRUPTIVE THIRD FORCE TACTICS IN LEBANON. SAID JORDANIAN INTERCEPTS SHOWED THAT RADICAL FEDAYEEN ELEMENTS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT FATAH LEAD IN ARRANGING CEASEFIRE AND ARMY RESPONSE HAD INEVITABLY ENGAGED FATAH FORCES TOO. SAID HE THOUGHT SITUATION MOVING " FROM JUNE 1970 TO SEPTEMBER 1970," WITH ALL- OUT SHOWDOWN IN OFFING. ZAYD SAID THAT ALTHOUGH CITY OF BEIRUT HAD NOT YET DIVIDED ALONG CONFESSIONAL LINES, WITH FIGHTING BETWEEN CIVILIAN POPULATION, CONFLICT BETWEEN ARMY AND FEDAYEEN COULD NOT CONTINUE FOR MORE THAN A FEW DAYS AT PRESENT LEVELS WITHOUT CHECKMATE OR DEFEAT OF ARMY FORCES. NOTING SMALL SIZE OF LEBANESE ARMY, ZAYD SIAD IT ALSO LACKED COHESIVENESS, HEAVY EQUIPMENT OR MOBILITY OF JORDAN ARMY AND COULD NOT STAND UP MUCH LONGER TO EXISTING FEDAYEEN FORCES.

2. OUTSIDE INTERVENTION. ZAYD SAID THAT IF REPORTS OF ENTRY OF HEAVY FEDAYEEN UNITS FROM SYRIA PROVED TRUE, THAT THEY WOULD UN- DOUBTEDLY ATTEMPT APPROACH BEIRUT FROM SOUTH AND HE HAD NO DOUBTS THAT ISRAEL WOULD INTERVENE TO INTERCEPT THESE UNITS. WHETHER ISRAEL WOULD OCCUPY LAND OR MERELY ATTEMPT TO MAUL HOSTILE FORCES WAS NOT CLEAR. HE THOUGHT THERE WAS POSSIBILITY THAT ISRAEL MIGHT ALSO USE OCCASION TO MOUNT PREEMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST NEWLY REINFORCED SYRIAN MILITARY FORMATIONS. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT, IF ANY, SIGNIFICANCE COULD BE READ INTO ASSAD VISIT TO MOSCOW AND OF SOVIET AIR FORCE CHIEF OF STAFF TO DAMASCUS, BUT THEY WERE WORRISOME, GIVEN AMBIGUOUS SOVIET- SYRIAN EXCHANGES BEFORE JUNE 1967 WAR.

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3. JORDANIAN ROLE. ZAYD SAID JORDAN LYING LOW. SAW NO WAY FOR JORDAN TO GET ANY HELP TO LEBANON EVEN IF IT WANTED TO. HAD NO

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